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4. What Is The Function Of The Mind In Our Usual State Of Being?

How Can It Serve The Process Of Inner Transformation?

Lord Pentland - Mr. Nyland

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Lord Pentland:

The subject is: What is the function of the mind in our usual state of being. How can it serve the process of inner transformation? And perhaps you were struck by the appearance in tonight's subject, for the first time in this series, of the idea of inner transformation. It came to me as a sort of challenge that we always have to move on. We have to try to face each subject, if we can, more and more deeply, more and more quietly. And at the same time, in responding to the challenge, one wishes above all to avoid falling into the error of believing that anything can be changed, first of all; and one wishes to remember, as we did at the beginning of this series, that inner transformation begins and continues from the moment of self-observation; that it comes from that alone; and that it comes from that moment when, so to speak, there is liberated in me the power of understanding myself. And it is in coming back again and again to the place, the center of gravity if you like, where I can have that experience that I feel the need more and more to be free from my thoughts. So that it is just here that the question of tonight comes. One would wish above all, tonight, to convey how important it is that this question about the place of the mind should become active in us. I will try to give some indications for an answer, but I feel that what is important is the question itself. And that each time one feels the question one doesn't need to answer it, but that if one does answer it, one tries to give a fresh answer. Because everything that one has learned comes in the way of feeling the question as it really is.

So we wish to come to the experience, relatively speaking, of the whole of myself, the experience of I. And in trying to do that I see that the mind resists, because it claims to be the whole of myself, it claims to be I. And in trying again and again, I understand in a way it is very well fitted to make this claim because it is like a mirror in which the whole of the experience of my outer world and my inner world is reflected, certainly very distorted, but everything I have seen or experienced has been given a name, or is a picture or a conception.

And so everything that I have experienced can appear, so to speak, on the screen, on the mirror of my mind. Certainly, the other functions are also like mirrors of my experience and they also have associations which divide and spread, but in observing my mind I see that there is a particular quality, which it has, which gives a certain spurious life to this picture that is produced on this screen of my mind. The attention of my mind has this quality of being able to divide very easily. For example, you will find that you can think about something at the same time you are listening to me, and that this takes place in your mind is something that cannot be denied, because it is at the basis of what we call comparison. So it seems to me, in this ability of the mind to divide, to associate one thing with another thing, we get a spurious idea that there is a movement in the mind, that there can be a movement towards a conclusion, towards the truth. Now, of course the idea of a search, a search for truth, a search for the whole of myself, is reflected, like everything else is reflected, in my mind. I am just trying to suggest one of the ways in which, perhaps, when we are reminded by the mind of our search, the mind itself can claim to be the field, the ground, in which we should search, if you follow what I mean.

So we have this mind which is turning, which is always restless, always moving, and little by little as we try to observe it, we shall ask ourselves: why is the mind always in motion? Why does it never get exhausted, and quiet? Why doesn't it die down by itself? The idea is that the mind is kept in motion by shocks, by shocks which are received from the outside world, and also from the other functions, and from my inner world.

And here perhaps I may try to speak simply about another thing we observed in the mind. And that is, that when the mind divides, the greater part of the attention always seems to go to the place that has been most deeply impressed. For instance, if you have been impressed with the importance of putting a question here tonight, it is very difficult for you to listen to me. Or, if you have been impressed when you were young, if your parents, as a child, had impressed on you the importance of being successful in life, then in later life, it brings about in you that as soon as you start to do anything, the impression of the result is what you see. You are always thinking how to make a successful result, and I think it may be partly in that way that we are able to avoid seeing or apprehending in our minds the shocks which all the time keep the mind in motion. The mind is impressed more and more as we grow older by certain habits of thinking, by certain ways of doing things. And as we get older, the mind turns again and again to this way and we become less and less aware of the shocks which are reaching us from the outer world and from our inner world.

This is something of what I understand by the sleep and dreaming which can go on sometimes for long periods. You remember the passage where Mr. Ouspensky speaks about going to the printer's and so on, all this time in dreams, not being aware of the shocks which were reaching him from the outer world. So maybe as these habits of thoughts, these repeated impressions become very deep, get rooted in our minds, the mind becomes like a field which is full of roots, and stumps, and stones. So no new things are able to grow in it.

So if we turn now to the second part of the question, the question is how to cultivate this field, how to break up these roots, and stumps, and stones. It must be by becoming more aware of ourselves and of the outside world which is causing this stream of associations, and of the shocks which all the time are putting the mind in motion. And I hope I won't be lying too much if I try to indicate how these same properties of the mind which I have mentioned, and which are only some of what we can observe, may enter into the process of becoming aware. You see, just because the mind attention divides so easily it might be possible, if we cared a little more, not to put the whole of the attention of the mind into these habits, to keep a little back, to begin to question a little -- the answers we give to everything. So that little by little this questioning might bring about a search by which we could come in touch with an influence which could help us to be really impressed inside by the feeling of our own ignorance. My mind might be more available to know, more and more, what is taking place moment by moment around me and inside me.

Mr. Gurdjieff left us several symbolic ideas about the mind and in thinking about that I thought to choose just one. He said the mind could be a policeman, and I see I have misunderstood this idea very much. Not a policeman who gives orders and tasks and shouts and directs the other parts of the body, but let us say, a policeman who never forgets the inner place from which he derives his authority, and who can see the various directions from which events are approaching and let some pass and let some enter, if you see what I mean. Of course, the other functions have to enter, the feeling is also needed in order that we have this watcher. The feeling is also needed, but it is just exactly in studying the mind and the way in which the mind can be turned towards our search that we shall understand how the feeling also has to be able to look up and yet not lose touch altogether with my subjective side. The work on the mind comes first and from that we may be able to understand a little later about the feeling.

Now, as to what one might call real thought, this is a function which we don't have. If we have glimpses of it, it is only at the rare moments when we feel the question, "Who am I?" What I said does not apply to that more continuous or more stable thought. What I have said was to indicate some ways in which we could prepare our ordinary thought so that it doesn't interfere with the possible growth of this new function, which could bring about a real harmony within myself and with the forces outside.

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Mr. Nyland:

I think it is a very difficult question to talk about the mind, because we know very little about it; and if we start to study what actually takes place in what we call the thought process, we are quite amazed at how intricate our brain is. Therefore, we have to be very simple about this, because we have to consider a human being simply as he is, as his mind functions. And what is there in a human being which actually could become interested in work, either mentally or by means of his feeling? Tonight we will only talk about the functions of the mind regarding that, and regarding what is meant by the utilization of one's mind for the purpose of inner transformation.

The mind of man is his psyche, and the brain is its organ. There are different forms of brains. Gurdjieff talks about three-brained beings. There are three kinds of brains: an instinctive brain, and an emotional brain, and a thinking brain. We will talk mostly about thinking brains tonight, although the others become important from the standpoint of what a human being is. And particularly when I want to think about the functions of myself, and my body, and how I operate, what directs what, I have to admit there are many things in my human being that really have nothing to do with my mind, although sometimes I think it has; and sometimes I believe that I could direct certain functions in my body which can take place very well without my mind. All of the instinctive brain, which is centered in the spinal column, is really without any particular consciousness. And even the emotional functions are very often directed from some part of my brain which is still below that level of consciousness which I call that what is the material that is in the skull, in the cortex.

It is that particular part that becomes very important for us regarding work. It is there that I start to think. When I say "I", it is really that particular function, although it is closely connected with my

emotional center, which I call a center although it isn't, and my instinctive center which is also called a center and it isn't. The only thing that is really like a center is that part of my brain with which I could become conscious, and where I believe that my thinking process occurs, and mostly where certain actions are directly related to a thought process that occurs to me when I, so-called, think.

When I receive impressions through sense organs, part of my brain starts to function. It is a small part of brain, but it has to be reserved especially for receiving certain sensation. There is another part of my brain, - I call it formatory, - which is usually in front; and there is another part I also know about which has to do more or less with pondering, or the valuation of certain thoughts. But in addition to that, there is a tremendous quantity of material in my brain that is now in the cortex that is what actually is the top of my head, which is not used at all; and it is so-called the neutral, or the silent functions, silent areas. It is part of this method that I believe becomes very important when we try to consider the acquisition of something new which has to do with work.

Now, regarding work, I think we have to distinguish between what a man is at the present time and what he is potentially. A man is at the present time Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Sol-La-Si-Do, as an ordinary indication of what man at the present time represents, Do-Re-Mi being simply the physical body; the part of the physical body that, at Mi, receives air and overbridges Fa and then becomes Sol-La-Si; and Sol-La-Si, indicating intellectual center, Sol; La, emotional center; and Si being sex center. That is all there is, at the present time, of man as he is, as a human being.

We must distinguish that from what a man could become if we actually look at the possibility of an evolution for such a man. In that case he is at a different level, and not only as represented by Do-Re-Mi -- that is, in an instinctive, emotional and intellectual sense; and at that point, Mi, he has to have something very special in order to overcome this difficulty of becoming what he should be and not continue to repeat himself as Do-Re-Mi, Mi-Re-Do.

The question then enters: what is this particular kind of substance, or what kind of effort then should be made at this state of Mi, so I could actually start to develop, if it is possible for me, this question of higher emotional, higher intellectual and higher sex center. We call it simply, impressions made conscious. Conscious impressions represent a different form of energy from ordinary impressions which I get with my sense organs. In my sense organs, as I receive sensations, that kind of energy goes in the usual way through my body, and feeds different parts of my brain, which in turn feed different glands, which in turn secrete different substances and

keep me, as it were, going.

When I try to wake up, then I put myself, because of this wish to wake up, in a different state, and then receiving impressions at that time do not go the usual way but go to a different place in myself, and primarily I believe they will go to that area which at the present time is not used and is potentially -- and could grow out into the actuality of really developing certain functions which at the present time I do not possess. I call it simply a function which is -- probably to use the word non-identified -- it is a faculty of being objective to myself. This, I think, is a very difficult concept. Because I don't know very much about objectivity and I don't know very much about faculties. Gurdjieff, I believe, calls it the sixth sense, the sixth sense organ. He speaks about two that we don't know very much about.

This question of becoming impartial to oneself, - the question of acquiring a faculty with which I can observe and become conscious regarding myself and then record that what I see, - is really the faculty I am after; because in that way I could see myself as I am, without having my emotions take part in judging about that which is being seen. This I think has to do, of course, with the possibility of the further development of man in the direction of, in the first place, developing his emotional center and emotional body to its completion, and also starting on the road of beginning to function more or less intellectually, in the sense of making out of an impression something that looks like the development of an intellectual body.

If you remember the particular scale in which the three bodies are compared, you know that Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Sol-La-Si-Do, as far as the ordinary body is concerned, is complete up to Si. Do-Re-Mi, as far as feeling center is concerned only exists, and the Fa is not overbridged. As far as intellect is concerned, only the note Do is struck. And there is nothing of intellectual body in existence.

By making an impression conscious,-that is, by the fact that I wish to wake up and in that way try to see myself as I am, without any emotions entering, - I create in myself the possibility of an objectivity regarding myself, and then I wish to see that what I am, in the first place regarding my movements, regarding that what I am physically. Later on I will try to find out what it is that is an emotional function in myself. And having learned by a certain method regarding my physical body what it is to try to be objective and impartial, I will then try to become objective regarding my thought processes.

It is that necessity of the mind that then, at that time, has to be split, as it were, into two different kind of functions. One is that the mind continues to

function in its ordinary way, of thinking and associating thoughts; also a little bit of pondering perhaps. But the other is that my mind starts to function in accordance with this new faculty of being impartial regarding myself, and also to judge, - that is, to see without judgment, that what takes place at the moment when it happens. This is really work; because it doesn't help me if I continue in my ordinary thought process or in my ordinary feeling process, to continue to become an expert in that direction. If I wish to work on myself, what Gurdjieff calls Partkdolg-duty, I have to introduce something of a different kind of nature, and that nature has to do with objectivity. And since I do not know what objectivity is, the definition for that is, anything that is non-subjective could become objective for me.

I think the greatest difficulty in that sense is that my mind is not a pure instrument, to record what it sees. And I think in that respect my mind fails me. I do not have at the present time in my mind enough faculties that actually could become impartial regarding myself, because I constantly will, by conditioning and rationalisation processes, always try to make certain things appear differently in order to save myself, since I don't want to face the truth.

That, I think, is the most important part in work. It is to become honest regarding oneself. And I have to start by being honest regarding a very simple operation, of being awake regarding myself behaving or manifesting in a physical way first. If I could be impartial that way, and see myself as I am, then I do what is called in -- I don't want to go too far and deeply about that -- there is a certain mental process which is mentioned in Buddha; and the Buddhistic method of how to wake up. It is this mindfulness, which is simply that I try to become aware of myself -- in the first place, of all my actions in whatever I do. This I understand is work; and unless we constantly keep this in mind as an aim, I do not believe that it helps us very much to talk, around, about work, without actually trying to wake up. I think that is the most important part, because without this we will never have a chance to change and transform ourselves in our inner life.

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Mr. Stephen Grant: (Flinsch Group I)

In my efforts at self-observation, a different quality is experienced when I have a real question about my work, a real question about me. What is the relation between questions, in my work on self-observation?

Lord Pentland:

I don't know whether it has exactly to do with the subject today, but in any case it is a very important question. I would say that the moment of self-observation can be understood as a moment in which I collect some information, some answers to my questions. But if we understand it like that, we never have real moments of self-observation. The moment of self-observation is the moment in which I feel the power of being connected to more of myself, and in that moment, there is an understanding inherent in it, if you see what I mean. So after, I have to be very careful that this deep impression that has been made doesn't attract the interest and the attention of my mind, because then my mind can take that impression and the remains of that understanding, as if it were imformation, as if it were answers, and this will get in the way of my coming to the question at the next opportunity. Do you see what I mean?

Mr. Wheeler: (Sutta Group I)

I find that I am stuck on the experience of the power of the search itself. In trying to simplify the question itself, I had to realize that I don't know what my mind is. What I do know is that it is a great interfering factor in my work. But I try to see from my experience how it could be effective for transformation. As far as I got, it seemed to me that it was as a policeman; but that the effort that I exerted to make it act as the policeman, to sort my impressions, to bring my attention to the work, to bring ideas and associations which were valuable, and which would keep me on my task, that this effort, this search, created another kind of force. And it seemed to me that this force itself would bring me in some way to a contact with another kind of force, not the one that I know. This seemed tru

Mr. Nyland:

Maybe I don't understand you, quite. I think it is much simpler. When I try to observe myself, I am quite certain there is a certain section of my brain which has to have a different kind of function from the ordinary function of thought. And as soon as I allow my brain part that thinks to interfere with this particular effort of trying to become aware of myself, naturally my mind becomes my worst enemy.

My mind is also my friend. Without a mind I think I won't get very far regarding even the understanding,

let alone the knowledge of ideas. . If I only would go by my feelings, I would come to a certain point, and say: now what? But with my mind it is possible to try to get ideas clear, and to see what is understood by observing, by becoming aware, by trying to become impartial. All these concepts I can understand with my mind. But I will not have any further understanding, unless I transfer, convert, this knowledge into an actuality of doing. So the question is really very simple. I have an idea I wish to work. Naturally, I am stimulated towards wishing to work because of a lot of associative thoughts, or feelings, or realizations that I have about myself -- that I ought to do something about my life. But when I once know that I ought to work, I start with my mind, becoming observant regarding that what I am. That is a simple matter. It means work. It means of course I have to get at it. I have to transfer out of my mind a certain form of energy, use it, put it to work in making my body function, and then I have to try to become aware of my body functioning. I have left at that time completely, the realm of continuing to think about myself. I am engaged now in an effort, while I try to wake up to myself, of trying to be present to that what takes place. Now, if I do this for some time during the day, at different times during the day, I really will lose a great deal of interest in this not knowing, one way or another, how to think, or how to feel. It is a very clear concept. Work on oneself means: I apply the knowledge of what is meant by observing myself, by feeling myself, by accepting myself, by waking up to the fact that I exist. And something in me, part of my brain, as it were, splits off from the rest, and in that sense, for certain moments, becomes objective regarding myself and my functions.

Mrs. Brinton: (Wolfe Group I)

Could you say something about the mind and reason? My search for the meaning of life has been, in a sense testing ideas as to whether they make sense. In rare moments when I can be a little bit present, and really come a little closer to I, there is in these moments contained a meaning which is all balanced, and it is not necessary; in other words, the search is fulfilled. But the rest of the day, this search goes on, and there is all the time this weighing, - does it make sense or doesn't it make sense? In other words, is the mind the same as reason? Could you say something in relation to that?

Lord Pentland:

The danger we want to avoid falling into is to be inventing some reason, because the big difficulty is that when we start to make an effort for something we change the very conditions which we are

trying to understand. So it seems to me the point is one should not be asking oneself is this the sense or is that the sense, but to be trying to search in oneself, so one gets a little bit separated from this spurious movement which takes place in the mind, and connects oneself with the real movement, becomes related to the real movement of my life. What is the actual sense of what is going on? I feel what is going on - actually going on in all its confusion. I don't need to alter what is going on. But in order to feel that, I have to give up these questions that get in the way: Is this the meaning or is that the meaning? You see, these only get in the way of the real, true living process which is in harmony with all the outer functions, and which can only derive sense in my life when it is connected with a bigger world. In any case, not to be so afraid that one would hang on in one's mind with what seems to connect one to a system of work, but to give up a system and simply to search for the movement which is inside one and outside one, the movement and rhythm and tempo, because the movement of the thoughts you have gets in the way of the real tempo, except at very exceptional moments.

Mrs. Metz:
(Welch Group I)

I have seen that a certain part of the brain must be disciplined. In order to make an effort, the part of the brain that is an ordinary part has to be silenced in order for something else to happen. I have seen that I can experience something once that is quieted down. This, I feel, is a feeling in me not connected with my brain. Why is it that after this feeling has passed, that the brain understands it in retrospect?

Mr. Nyland:

Are we talking now about work, or about ordinary life? Because in ordinary life, I can have something in my brain and I can do certain things against the grain. Afterwards, I can rationalize about it and I can say that my brain was right or wrong, and my feeling was right or wrong. But this, for me, is still ordinary life. Is that what you meant? If it is not ordinary life and if it has anything to do with work, then the answer is that my brain and my body oppose each other. I want my body to do certain things according to what I think my brain says it ought to do. And my body doesn't like it. It has a brain,or a mind, of its own. And it is this constant opposing of that which is positive in my mind regarding that which is negative in my body which constantly makes a struggle between the two things. When I start to apply that what I understand by impartiality and work, I have a great difficulty sometimes making my body do what the

mind tells it to do. Gurdjieff explains it very well in Purgatory chapter. If you want to read that, you will see how he talks about the two opposing forces, and how, in a state of self-awareness - which is the word he uses, then one starts to understand what takes place; and that then in that kind of a condition one is helped by the neutralizing force as represented by one's feeling; and that the feeling, representing a force, will always go to that what is more powerful. If my mind is more powerful, the neutralizing force will help it and it goes in that direction. If my body is more powerful, the neutralizing force will go there and I will be negative. But it is this acceptance of one's self as it is, with the mind directing it, where my mind starts to function in a correct way in relation to that what opposes it. Gurdjieff calls it the Transalpalnian friction. It is that what is the opposition creating the friction which gives me the energy for work. So if we are talking about that, then that sets your mind, let's call it at rest, because it gives the mind the proper place. Everything else of the mind is, I would say, wishy-washy. It belongs to the mind, it is very nice, and we can have all kinds of thoughts and lovely ideas and things that are enjoyable - naturally, the mind functions that way. It functions by associations, rationalizations, covering this up, and so forth, protecting myself, a variety of things which from the standpoint of ordinary life are very interesting. But we are talking about how to get out of ordinary life onto a level of really being awake. Then my mind has a definite function to fulfill, and it is a starting point. Even if there is the wish - you might say it is part of my sub-centric intellect that starts - but nevertheless I have to start with something that is quite clear in my mind what is required of me. Then when I establish the relationship between my mind, my body and my feeling, I reach a certain state of - not necessarily harmony, but at least a certain state of becoming one regarding whatever my aim is,- to wake up. In that sense I reach a level which in ordinary life I do not reach.

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Mr. Campbell:
(Welch GroupI)

It seems to me that the way in which my mind is an enemy is not that it functions by association, but that the associations are meaningless and lead me away from what I begin with, to nothing. And at the same time, there are associations which lead me back to a point where it is as if the associations in the mind lead me to a conclusion to leave the mind. And those associations, almost self-denying associations, self-annihilating associations are my friend. But I don't understand how such associations, or how I, could have a part in creating

that kind of function of my mind, and whether it would be possible to transform my old meaningless associations into new associations which lead me to myself.

Lord Pentland: In any case, we have here a question which has to do simply with the study of the mind. We are not asked now to consider how to change this, or come to that, we are asked to consider what is the mind like, so to speak. So perhaps here we can come back to what is the only possible approach to understanding the mind, not so much as an enemy or as a friend, but simply seeing it impartially. And I must ask myself: Do I know what is the mind, what is the energy of the mind? Can I distinguish it from the energy of the body? Or of the feelings? The associations of the mind work on the lowest of the three levels in the psyche, therefore it is the one which receives the most shocks from all other parts. We must start observing in that way, because I am not sure I agree with you that the associations lead anywhere. I think associations will only lead to more associations, all on that level. It is a mistake to think that one reaches the end of the rainbow in the mind. On the contrary, the mind can easily produce a big picture but I am not sure it can distinguish quality, between truth and lying. So what is in your enquiry is the need to understand the mind better by seeing it in action, to give up again and again the little knowledge you have gained of its working, in order to see it afresh. Only such understanding could begin to serve as a support for some kind of thought which would go on without words behind.

Miss Elenz: Since I do not know my mind, nor do I know my I, I cannot trust my mind, but I have to fall back on my judgment, whatever that is. Where does my work lie, in relation to judgment, within the mind?

Mr. Nyland: I think thare are moments when you can rely on your mind. They may not last very long, but there are certain times when I am absolutely certain that that what I see is so. In that particular experience there is no - almost I would say no time for any further thought or any feeling. I take things as they are. For instance, if I have a shock I realize all of a sudden that I exist and something has happened. It is at such a time, - I don't know if you are familiar enough with shocks that are really like terrible moments that one never forgets - that in such a case there is really no thought or no feeling but I remember it very well. If I try to wake up to myself, I also try to bring about a certain state in which I see myself impartially, without judgment. It lasts maybe for one or two seconds, but at the same time I have an experience

of a certain form of unity. Immediately after, I fall back again in an ordinary process of thought and feeling. And then my memory starts to function and I remember that what I experienced; and I see it then from the standpoint of a judgment - of how I was at that time, even when I at that time was awake. So my mind has a function in that sense - that it starts to judge, but it judges about events of the past. That is my memory. It is not work, but it is helpful to understand myself. Exactly the same way as in psychoanalysis, I let free associations go. I keep on letting them flow as they come. It belongs to the past. For myself, I probably do not have as much advantage of it as a psychoanalyst who sits there and can look at it objectively. I myself am still bound up with it since it were events of the past. At the same time, it is a certain free flow in which I become more and more objective. I don't reach it, but more and more objective because I am less and less subjective. That is, my interest is less and less although it belongs to me. Very much like this kind of process is when I look back in my memory, having seen, and now studying, myself as how I was. This can be very helpful as trying to avoid certain things in the future. If I could be awake, I then will remember that what I was, and I will avoid being then again what I was. It is an intricate process. But the only way by which I can reach it is by trying to wake up as much, as often, as I can, regarding this particular behaviour form, whatever it is that I judge. Because in the state of objectivity, I do not judge. I accept.

Mr. Ben Grant:
(Welch Group I)

Is there not a bigger question about inner transformation itself? Do I know anything about this? And does my mind have to continually remind me that this is something about which I do not know anything?

Lord Pentland:

In a sense, we could say that I have to remember I don't know. But I am not sure I understand what you are asking. With a part of myself I can try to question my certainty about things, but it is not so easy just to say, - I must remember I don't know. You see, here we come back to the idea of relativity. In a way I know something -- always enough to begin. I try to remember something, as well as remembering that I don't know, in general, what inner transformation is. A thought comes to me, for instance, that I have to try to release myself from all those associations, and in making that effort I really make a step toward inner transformation. I make another step and again associations are still there, but this time they are closer to myself. Again another step, again I find associations, but now

still truer, still closer to me. And with another step, eventually I may come to a place where I have some freedom to move, if you know what I mean. So I think it would be a mistake to finish, since this is the last question, with the idea that we know nothing, and yet certainly the most important thing is to keep remembering how little we know.

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